

TIP SHEET: WORKING FROM HOME WITH CHILDREN

Having the opportunity to work from home, especially for extended periods of time, can seem like a dream come true for many people. Some studies have even shown that individuals who work remotely feel more productive and less stressed. However, according to the American Psychology Association, prolonged time periods of working from home in isolation can have numerous negative side-effects to both your mental and physical health such as sleep troubles, depression, mental burnout and more.

These stressors can be increased if you find yourself in a situation where you are working from home while also having a child/children to take care of. Between having to take care of your work responsibilities and caring for young children, this can take its toll on both your mental and physical wellbeing.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

HAVE A ROUTINE OR SCHEDULE

It can be easy getting into a habit of not working when you are sitting around at home. From the constant possible distractions of chores, pets, the tv or scrolling through the internet – there are many things that can get in the way of productivity.

Having a schedule, however, is a great way to help you avoid all of those productivity-killing distractions. Creating a sense of 'normalcy' as if you were back in the office allows you to be more focused and structured in your tasks throughout the day. It is also important when working from home to schedule time in your day for breaks that take your eyes away from your screen. Studies have shown that spending excess time looking at analog screens, such as those found on computers and mobile phones, can impact your body's natural sleep and wake cycles.

It is also crucial for children to understand and follow a sense of structure and routine. Just because you are working from home does not mean that typical school night rules don't apply. By maintaining your typical daily schedule of waking, eating, working and relaxing, as if you were in the office or the children at school, allows for all parties to avoid falling into any possible confusion

DESIGNATE AN 'OFFICE' SPACE AND A PLAY SPACE

Like having a routine, having your own designated area at home that is your 'office' can alleviate those feelings of stress and anxiety that prolonged isolation away from colleagues may bring. Be sure to pick a place that is not your couch or bed and instead focus on finding a location that is going to be quiet and free of distractions.

You should also be sure to try and upgrade that designated area to help better improve your productivity and overall wellbeing. Try finding yourself a wide table or desk to work at, get yourself a comfortable chair or even things like an extra monitor can help you feel more productive.

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It is also important to separate any 'play area' that your child/children may have away from your designated workspace. Having both areas in the same place or even the same room can make it difficult for you to concentrate on your work or 'play time' when needed.

MOVE AROUND

An often-overlooked part of working from home is taking time during your day to get up and be active. Exercising, even for just 20 to 30 minutes a day, can help eliminate stress and anxiety by releasing endorphins into your body that help trigger feelings of positivity and happiness.

If you're able to, try to go outside for your daily dose of Vitamin-D to help your body produce more serotonin, one of your body's neurotransmitters that is produced to help regulate your mood, happiness and anxiety.

It's especially important for children to be able to be active not only as a way to help strengthen their growing muscles and bones, but to benefit their mental health as well. Regular physical activity in children has shown to increase confidence, manage anxiety and depression. It can also help boost their self-esteem and overall cognitive abilities.

STAY IN CONTACT

Having someone at the office that you can speak with when something gets stressful is a great way to blow off some steam during the workday. However, what happens when you're stuck at home away from coworkers? To help get past this roadblock, try maintaining contact with your coworkers while you are working from home.

Reaching out and speaking with coworkers when you're working from home, even if it is just a simple instant message is a great way to have some sort of social interaction. These minor interactions are a simple way to help combat the feelings of isolation or loneliness that you may feel while working from home. The same goes for children. Allowing them to stay in contact with their classmates and friends can help continue their social interactions.

Also, be sure to not be afraid to ask for help when needed. Reach out to a friend, family member or even a trusted neighbor if you find it too difficult to balance your work and caregiving responsibilities. If you do find yourself struggling to find balance working from home while being a caregiver, reach out to your EAP/MAP for additional resources and referrals.